

Capitalization Rules

Capitalization 1. First word in a sentence

Begin the first word in every sentence with a capital letter.

Who won the eating contest?

That man ate 17 bananas in two minutes.

Capitalization 2. Personal pronoun I

Write the pronoun **I** with a capital letter.

At the last possible minute, I changed my mind.

Capitalization 3. Names and initials of people

Almost always, begin each part of a person's name with a capital letter.

Toby Ohara Rosie Delancy

Sue Ellen Macmillan

Some names have more than one capital letter. Other names have parts that are not capitalized. Check the correct way to write each person's name. (Look in a reference book, or ask the person.)

Tim O'Hara Tony de la Cruz

Jeannie McIntyre

Use a capital letter to write an initial that is part of a person's name.

B. J. Gallardo J. Kelly Hunt

John F. Kennedy

Capitalization 4. Titles of people

Begin the title before a person's name with a capital letter.

Mr. Sam Yee Captain Cook

Dr. Watson Governor Maxine Smart

Do not use a capital letter if this kind of word is not used before a person's name.

Did you call the doctor?

Who will be our state's next governor?

Capitalization 5. Names of relatives

A word like **grandma** or **uncle** may be used as a person's name or as part of a person's name. Begin this kind of word with a capital letter.

Only Dad and Aunt Ellie understand it.

Usually, if a possessive pronoun comes before a word like **grandma** or **uncle**, do not begin that word with a capital letter.

Only my dad and my aunt understand it.

Capitalization 6. Names of days

Begin the name of a day with a capital letter.

Most people don't have to work on Saturday or Sunday.

Capitalization 7. Names of months

Begin the name of a month with a capital letter.

At the equator, the hottest months are March and September.

Capitalization 8. Names of holidays

Begin each important word in the name of a holiday with a capital letter. Words like **the** and **of** do not begin with capital letters.

They usually have a picnic on the Fourth of July and a fancy dinner party on Thanksgiving.

Capitalization 9. Names of streets and highways

Begin each word in the name of a street or highway with a capital letter.

Why is Lombard Street known as the most crooked road in the world?

Capitalization 10. Names of cities and towns

Begin each word in the name of a city or town with a capital letter.

In 1957, the Dodgers moved from Brooklyn to Los Angeles.

Capitalization 11. Names of states, countries, and continents

Begin each word in the name of a state, country, or continent with a capital letter.

The story was set in Nevada, but they shot the film in Mexico.

There are very high mountain peaks in Antarctica.

Section 12. Names of mountains and bodies of water

Begin each word in the name of a mountain, river, sea, or ocean with a capital letter.

*Amelia Earhart's plane was lost somewhere over the **Pacific Ocean**.*

Capitalization 13. Abbreviations

If the word would begin with a capital letter, begin the abbreviation with a capital letter.

*On the scrap of paper, the victim had written, "Wed.—**Dr. Lau**."*

Capitalization 14. Titles of works

Use a capital letter to begin the first word, the last word, and every main word in the title of a work. The words **the**, **a**, and **an** do not begin with capital letters except at the beginning of a title. Coordinating conjunctions and prepositions also do not begin with capital letters. (See Grammar 45 and Grammar 48.)

*Archie and Edith were the main characters in the television series **All in the Family**.*

Capitalization 15. Other proper nouns

Begin each major word in a proper noun with a capital letter. A proper noun is the special name of a particular person, place, or thing. (See Grammar 13.) Usually, the words **the**, **a**, and **an**, coordinating conjunctions, and prepositions do not begin with capital letters. (See Grammar 45 and Grammar 48.)

*Jerry rushed to the **Burger King** and ordered three **Whoppers**.*

Capitalization 16. Proper adjectives

Begin each word in a proper adjective with a capital letter. A proper adjective is an adjective that is formed from a proper noun. (See Grammar 37.)

*That **American** author writes about **English** detectives.*

*She loves **Alfred Hitchcock** movies.*

Capitalization 17. Direct quotations

Begin the first word in a direct quotation with a capital letter. (See Punctuation 14–16.)

*Dr. Pavlik said, "**T**here are simply no teeth in the denture law."*

If the words that tell who is speaking come in the middle of a quoted sentence, do not begin the second part of the quotation with a capital letter.

*"**T**here are simply no teeth," said Dr. Pavlik, "**i**n the denture law."*

Capitalization 18. Greetings and closings in letters

Begin the first word in the greeting of a letter with a capital letter.

***D**ear Mr. Lincoln: **D**ear Uncle Abe,*

Begin the first or only word in the closing of a letter with a capital letter.

***S**incerely yours, **V**ery truly yours,
Love,*

Capitalization 19. Outlines

In an outline, begin the first word of each heading with a capital letter.

*II. **H**ouses by mail order*

*A. **F**irst sold by Sears, Roebuck in 1903*

*1. **B**uild-it-yourself kits*

*2. **I**ncluded all materials and instructions*

*B. **O**ther companies now in business*

In an outline, use capital Roman numerals to label main ideas. Use capital letters to label supporting ideas. For ideas under supporting ideas, use Arabic numerals. For details, use small letters. Use a period after each Roman numeral, capital letter, Arabic numeral, or small letter.

*I. **M**iner George Warren*

*A. **R**isked his share of Copper Queen mine in bet*

*1. **B**et on race against George Atkins*

*a. **W**arren on foot*

*b. **A**tkins on horseback*

*2. **L**ost property worth \$20 million*